

There are three primary components needed for any successful school discipline and behavior management system. These are: (1) the development of student and staff skills that result in students demonstrating prosocial interpersonal, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills; (2) the development of teacher, grade-level, and building-wide accountability systems that encourage and reinforce appropriate behavior through meaningful student incentives and consequences; and (3) the development of staff and administrative consistency so that skills are taught and student behavior is reinforced in a constant and predictable fashion across students, teachers, settings, and situations.

about the choices or steps for this skill:

1. Take deep breaths and count to ten.
2. Think about their possible good choices—ignore the teasing, ask the person to stop, walk away, or find an adult for help.
3. Choose and get ready to act of their choice. Then, they would “Just do it!” And, once successful, they would tell themselves that they did a “Good job!”



# The Importance of Teaching Social Skills



In a Project ACHIEVE school, every teacher is trained and prepared to effectively teach the Stop & Think Social Skills Program to their students on a bi-monthly basis in their classrooms. But the skills must be taught and utilized alongside a school-wide accountability system that identifies students' behavioral expectations (connected with positive responses, incentives, and rewards) and intensity levels of inappropriate behavior—from behavior that is handled by teachers in a routine fashion to serious behavior that warrants a suspension or expulsion (connected with negative responses, consequences, and interventions). Finally, all of this—the teaching, prompting, reinforcing, and, eventually, the positive student self-management—must be done in a consistent fashion.

In the end the skill, accountability, and consistent components must be viewed as interdependent. For example, if a student has not mastered a critical set of social skills, all the incentives or consequences in the world will not result in appropriate behavior, and consistency almost becomes a non-factor. Conversely, if students are not reinforced in consistent ways, they learn to not trust the accountability system, and they will not demonstrate the social skills that they have learned.

The development of prosocial skills is critical relative to students and effective discipline programs. Over the past fifteen years, Project ACHIEVE's *Stop & Think Social Skills Program* (Knoff, 2001) has become the nucleus of this first element of an effective school-wide discipline program. Briefly, the *Stop & Think Program* utilizes a social learning theory approach where specific skills (e.g., the first five skills typically are Listening, Following Directions, Asking for Help, Ignoring Distractions, and Dealing with Teasing) are taught within the context of a five-step “universal language.” The universal language is: “Stop and think!” “Are you going to make a good choice or a bad choice?” “What are your choices or steps?” “Just do it!” and “Good job!” The teaching involves using the Stop & Think language, with a specific social skill's “skill script” embedded in the language (see below), then having teachers model both the language and the behavior related to that specific skill (like Dealing with Teasing), then having students roleplay the skill and script in simulated situations, then providing the students feedback on their “performance,” and transferring this training to other times, settings, and situations. For the skill Dealing with Teasing, students would be taught to: “Stop and Think!” They would decide whether “to make a good choice or a bad choice?” After deciding to make a good choice, they would think

This foundation to Project ACHIEVE's Positive Behavioral Self-Management approach is one of seven parts of Project ACHIEVE's evidence-based approach to school improvement. Implemented in nearly 1,500 schools or school districts over the past 15 years, Project ACHIEVE has been designated as an exemplary evidence-based national model prevention program focusing on school improvement and student success by the U. S. Department of Health & Human Services, and the U. S. Department of Justice. Project ACHIEVE places particular emphasis on (1) improving student achievement and academic progress, (2) facilitating positive school climates, (3) encouraging effective school and instructional processes, and (4) increasing parental and community involvement and support. Given its numerous positive results across the country, Project ACHIEVE received the 2003 National Administrator's Award for School-Based Mental Health Programs from SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). For a more complete description of Project ACHIEVE, please consult its website at [www.stopandthinksocialskills.com](http://www.stopandthinksocialskills.com), [www.projectachieve.info](http://www.projectachieve.info) or contact the author at [knoffprojectachieve@earthlink.net](mailto:knoffprojectachieve@earthlink.net). ■

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center.

# What Works for Students?

## Teachers Working Together!



interest, comments on how they have tried such procedures, and expressions of gratitude to Mr. Brindle for taking the time to share.

Finally, Alison asked the group about concerns. Two issues were identified: 1) lunch and 2) before and after school behavior. A note-taker wrote down ideas for solutions to each problem on a white board. Each grade level had at least one teacher who made a comment, the lunch lady made some comments, the secretary made some comments, and para-



Student behavioral concerns are present in every school. It does not matter how long one has been teaching, if the school climate and culture is in tiptop health, or if the community is cohesive and well functioning...problems or opportunities for collaboration and adjustment in routines and procedures will always arise. The question is, HOW does a school keep teaching and continually adjust to whatever comes its way?

The Utah Behavioral Initiative (UBI) team at Heber Valley Elementary, in Wasatch School District, has come up with a solution—a meeting. Oh, we can hear your groans, and under-the-breath comments... “Educators do not need to attend more stupid meetings!” We couldn’t agree more, educators do not need to attend any stupid meetings. So, shall we ask, what makes a meeting stupid? Is it spending time talking about or listening to things that have no relevance to what happens every day in the school? Or, is it not having an opportunity to have a voice in the decisions made? Finally, is it not having an agenda or organizational components to maintain adherence to schedules and time constraints?

The UBI team in attendance: Alison Fillmore, Cydnee Diamond, Becky Sanchez, Jeff Kelly, and Kevin Brindle, made certain that this meeting was relevant, an open forum, and well organized. They also made it FUN!

How did they do it? First, no one was required to attend the meeting. The invitation was open to the faculty and staff. The time set aside for the meeting was carefully selected as being a time when anyone could come, even office staff. The seats were set up in a huge circle so everyone could see all participants. Oh, and they had treats and prizes.

After a happy start with a door prize and goofy little song, Alison Fillmore started facilitating the meeting by asking the question, “What are the positives to our behavioral support system at our school?” Many teachers contributed impressions of positive practices and thank you’s to the group. Some of the specific comments included: teachers who are greeting students at the door in the morning, teachers’ positive attitudes, participation in the school-wide 200 Club, and a willingness to support one another and all students.

Next Kevin Brindle shared with the staff how he uses inter-class time out or time to think as a behavior support measure in his classroom. He distributed the forms that he uses for this procedure and offered his assistance if other teachers wanted to try it. Teachers responded with

professionals made comments. The energy released to solve problems and make school safer and more supportive for students and staff was electrifying!

Some comments were “less than positive” and some individuals were more positive than others. One thing that we liked, was the attitude of staff; the attitude spoke these words, “Thank you for your concern or comments, do you have another solution?” What a productive way to communicate!

Heber Valley Elementary demonstrated during their meeting a full understanding that effective behavior support, as Bill Jenson stresses, is NOT a perpetual motion machine. It requires “tinkering” and their darn good meeting was the best example of collaborative tinkering that we have seen in a long time!

To the staff and UBI team at Heber Valley Elementary, YOU ARE AMAZING-WORKING TOGETHER IN A POSITIVE MANNER WORKS FOR STUDENTS! ■



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